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Conservation Commission Minutes 03/05/2009

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
 MINUTES
 MARCH 5, 2009

Mr. Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m. in the Town Hall Auditorium. Present were Nathaniel Stevens, David White, William O'Rourke, Charles Tirone Ezra Benjamin, and Ellen Reed of the Commission. Brian Thomas, applying for Associate membership, was also in attendance. Catherine Garnett, of the Commission, was not in attendance.

Also in attendance were: Dan Driscoll, Jason Lederer, Isabelle Montesi, Chris Loreti, Roland Chaput, Christine Scypinski, Stuart Cleinman, Pat Lieberman, Nancy Sweeney, Andy Metzger, Joey Glushko, Sean Garballey, Greg Hunt, Chad Cox, Mike Galvin, Nicole Sanford, Lorraine Barra, Susan Hoye, Vladimir Jandjsek, Kim Alexander, Robert Smith, Julie Rioux, Ed Schwartz, JoAnn Robinson, Steve Revilak, and Frank Paragon.

7:45 p.m. - COMMISSION BUSINESS

Ms. Beckwith reported that Keyspan has requested the Certificate of Compliance for project #91-195. She will email the board to coordinate a sitewalk.

Mr. White reported that the deadline for responses to the Cookes Hollow Request for Proposals is due Thursday, March 12.

8:00 pm – NOTICE OF INTENT – ALEWIFE GREENWAY (#91-200)

Mr. Stevens explained that this is the continued hearing from November. The Board of Selectmen have given preliminary approval of the plans in a vote on 3/2/09.

Mr. Driscoll presented the Commission with a signed letter regarding the latest revisions and concerns, including the use of approximately 60% boardwalk and 40% aggregate path in the Sunnyside section. The funding will be on the Transportation Improvement Plan for this year. In a related project, the reconstruction of the Mystic Valley Parkway bridge over the Alewife, there will be a 12-foot wide sidewalk. The pathway on the Somerville side of the reservation is also moving forward.

Mr. Lederer presented modifications to the plans that include guardrails, with locations to be staked in the field, a balance between providing clearance to driveways but also discourage parking by non-residents. Plantings will be added to provide a buffer to noise and light from Dilboy stadium. Cedars, that will mature at 40-50 feet tall, will be planted. The boardwalks will be 8 feet wide and the stabilized aggregate will be 9 feet wide. The edges of the aggregate path grow in over time. The staging area has been eliminated from behind the homes along Sunnyside Ave. The water access point on Sheet P1 has been relocated to the existing informal boat access point, at the easement. Filter socks specifications were provided and will be utilized as they don't need trenching in, shouldn't have weed seeds and are easier to relocate and reuse, or cut open and left in place, spreading the mulch in place. The outer covering can be changed to differing materials to allow for it to degrade at a specified rate.

Knotweed control will not be done with herbicides but with shading. The management plan of cutting and removing will continue for 2 years. Local support by the Land Stewards is possible to help promote native species to out compete the regrowth.

The boardwalk design will be only 1 foot high with no rails.

The broken drainage pipes in the Sunnyside neighborhood will be fixed by DCR under a separate project.

The applicant will walk through the staked site with the Conservation Commission prior to any cutting or clearing. Planting will take place over a few seasons, to see what gets established and replant in areas that need it.

Ms. Scypinski thanked the applicants and then asked that the path be made only 4-6 ft wide since this is for passive recreation.

Some boardwalk is appropriate as the area does flood. The path will require maintenance. She preferred that no trees be removed as well as the sumac. She is very happy that the pipes will be repaired. She would like to see a natural mix of plantings.

Mr. Driscoll responded that width issues are always controversial but standards are required for funding approval. The Commissioner of DCR will not accept any further reduction in the widths.

Mr. Jandejssek agreed with Ms. Scypinski that this is a recreational greenway and we should protect the natural resources. He said that the path proposal takes up 9-10% of the property. He appealed to the Commission to protect the land for conservation. Mr. Smith asked that the path be reduced to 4-6 feet wide in order to de-emphasize the transportation aspect of the path on the Sunnyside side of the park.

Mr. Driscoll responded that on the Upper Charles project, the same requests were made, but that the area has reestablished as a dynamic ecosystem, and been studied by BU professor Richard Primack. Birding is a recreation.

Mr. Jandejssek asked if the boardwalk structure was not allowed to be built in floodplain. Mr. Stevens responded that the path probably doesn't qualify as a building structure.

Ms. Hoye responded that she is happy to learn that there is a wetland in her backyard. She is concerned that the boardwalk/path ratio of 60/40 will remain and not evolve to 80/20. She said the access road behind the houses is already there for people to walk on. As many existing trees should remain, as possible.

Mr. Driscoll responded that the boardwalk is expensive but more eco-friendly in that flood waters can flow underneath it along with amphibians. Plants colonize the area below. DCR is committed to the 60/40 ratio and could even reduce it to 50/50 if possible.

Mr. Loreti, of the Arlington Redevelopment Board, stated that the path should not be made narrower.

Ms. Alexander asked if Algonquin will still have access to the buried gas line. Mr. Driscoll responded yes and the landscaping budget will be ongoing to account for access disturbances.

The Commission asked that the layout of the boardwalk and path be staked out and inspected by the Commission.

Tirone/O'Rourke motioned to close the hearing; motion passed unanimously.

The board will deliberate and vote on the permit at the next meeting on 3/19/09.

8:30 pm - NOTICE OF INTENT – MYSTIC LAKES DAM (91-201)

Mr. Galvin presented the project to repair the existing dam between the two Mystic Lakes which was built during the Civil War. The existing emergency spillway operates over private property, Mr. Nyberg's. The slopes are too steep. There is no riprap armoring. The embankments seep water through them. The core wall is too low.

This rehabilitation project will include a larger wall raising Mr. Nyberg's property to the west of the dam. The corewall will be raised and the sand base will be grouted. Stormwater improvements will include installation of porous paving at the parking lot on the Medford side.

Ms. Sanford reported that the Medford hearing was continued to March 25. This is a limited project for dam safety. The embankments have been colonized by urban plant species. The impacts to resource areas, BLSF, LUW and Bank, will be minimized and mitigated. Cofferdams will be utilized to work in the dry.

Floodplain impacts will be mitigated with compensatory flood storage areas in both the upper and lower lakes. Tables of impacts and mitigation are included in the submittals.

Greater than 50 linear feet of bank will be impacted therefore a wildlife habitat analysis was performed. The erosion controls will be located as on the plans. The restoration plan will include removing old asphalt from an adjacent parking lot (on the Medford side) and replanting with native trees and shrubs. Approximately 10,000 sf of impervious surface will be removed.

Dr. Braun asked if there were any changes to the floodplain with this work. Mr. Cox responded that there will be a minor decrease (1 foot) in the 100 year flood from the existing, from a drawdown of the upper lake. The new draft information is provided in the hydrologic calculations provided with the permit application. The Cornell rain data was used in the FEMA/ENSR study.

Dr. Braun asked for a copy of this information to provide abutters with engineering calculations to support letters of map revisions or exclusion from flood insurance requirements.

Grading on the Arlington side of the dam will include restoring the yards of the Hines and Nyberg properties in the vicinity of the new wall.

Mr. Nyberg asked that the proposed fencing not be chain link, and that stone be used when possible.

Only 2-3 large trees will be removed on the Arlington side of the dam. The new dam will only be maintained as grass on the embankments. Large riprap, 36 inch diameter, will be used. The Medford Boat Club will use planters for additional landscaping elements. Construction will starting approximately Sept. 1, 2009.

Benjamin/White motioned to continue the hearing to 3/19 at 8pm; motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 11pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cori Beckwith
Commission Administrator